



Written by broadband engineer Alli Bone, the children's STEM book explains fiber-optic technology and how it is used in everyday life.

Article below By Levi Gwaltney for *Las Cruces Digest*

Source: Office of Broadband & Expansion

The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion released its annual Data Collection Report to the Legislature Oct. 1 2026

That Report Details :approximately \$900 million in state and federal broadband investments and projecting statewide access will reach 94% by the end of 2026.

Nearly 91% of New Mexico now has access to high-speed internet, according to a new state report that says more than 120,000 additional homes and businesses have been connected since 2022.

The New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion released its annual Data Collection Report to the Legislature Oct. 1, detailing approximately \$900 million in state and federal broadband investments and projecting statewide access will reach 94% by the end of 2026.

The office has secured \$675 million in federal funding and committed another \$225 million in state funding toward expanding high-speed internet access to homes, businesses and community facilities across New Mexico.

“This annual report demonstrates a true shift from broadband planning to implementation across New Mexico,” OBAE Director Jeff Lopez said.

Among the largest remaining efforts is the federal **Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment** program, which has approved **\$382 million** for New Mexico projects expected to connect more **than 42,500 locations across 32 counties**.

Several completed and ongoing projects directly affect southern New Mexico.

A **Sierra County project** completed ahead of schedule is providing nearly 3,000 new fiber connections and extending fiber access to Spaceport America.

More than **800 locations in Columbus** have gained broadband access, while nearly **900 student households in Silver City** and **Lordsburg** have been connected through **Student Connect projects**.

Statewide, more than 151,000 students, teachers and staff are now connected through **OBAE’s Statewide Education Network**, encompassing 17 school districts and charter schools. More than **\$150 million in grants** are also **supporting broadband projects in 19 Tribal communities**.

OBAE is currently managing nearly 60 infrastructure projects, with additional state- and federally funded projects expected to reach completion by the end of 2026.

Beyond Building the Network

As broadband infrastructure has expanded, the state's efforts have increasingly turned toward whether New Mexicans can afford and effectively use the connections becoming available.

OBAE created a statewide broadband affordability program to provide internet discounts to low-income residents. The office also operates a free broadband workforce training program that has trained 133 students to build and maintain broadband infrastructure.

A digital navigator program developed with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions is intended to help residents in rural, low-income and older communities develop the internet skills needed to access employment, healthcare and education online.

Another state-funded effort, **TechUp!**, distributed laptops and provided digital training through **Adelante DiverselT**.

Those efforts are receiving additional attention during Digital Inclusion Week, Oct. 4-10, a **national initiative focused on broadband access, affordability and digital literacy**.

In New Mexico, the week includes a statewide reading campaign designed to introduce children to the technology that makes high-speed internet possible.

More than 500 copies of ***Follow the Light: A Fiber Optic Adventure*** are being distributed to libraries, schools, community organizations and agencies around the state. Every New Mexico library is expected to receive a copy.

“This book will open the eyes of children across New Mexico and teach them about the wonders of fiber optics and technologies that permeate our world,” said Jennifer Nevarez, a member of OBAE’s support team who organized the reading campaign.

Bone and volunteer readers are participating in events around the state during Digital Inclusion Week, including scheduled appearances in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Los Alamos and Taos.

What's Next

OBAE's annual report identifies six priorities for the state's continuing broadband effort:

- statewide connectivity,
- affordability,
- strategic infrastructure,
- data and permitting,
- digital opportunity and network operations.

The report also recommends creation of an independent Office of Data and Mapping that would provide coordinated data services for public policy, program administration and technology planning throughout New Mexico.

OBAE was established in 2021 under the [New Mexico Broadband Access and Expansion Act](#), which requires the office to submit its Data Collection Report annually to state lawmakers.